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These Are the Happiest and Healthiest Cities in America

David Johnson
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Living near the beach doesn't guarantee your happiness — but it certainly doesn't hurt.

From Naples, Fla. to Honolulu, Hawaii, many of the U.S. cities that scored well on Gallup-Healthways' newly released Community Well-Being Index are located on the ocean. Researchers analyzed 350,000 interviews conducted in 2015 and 2016 to rank 189 communities by physical, emotional, financial, community and social health. Naples came in first for the second year in a row, followed closely by other metro areas near the ocean, like Barnstable, Mass. and Santa Cruz, Calif.

So is beachside living the key to health and happiness? Lead researcher Dan Witters says it's not so simple: "Clinical depression is less likely, and healthy eating is slightly improved, but after that the advantages run out." Holistic well-being is about more than good climate, Witters says. "You don't need a beach to have someone who encourages you to be healthy; you don't need a beach to learn new and interesting things; you don't need a beach to get to the dentist."
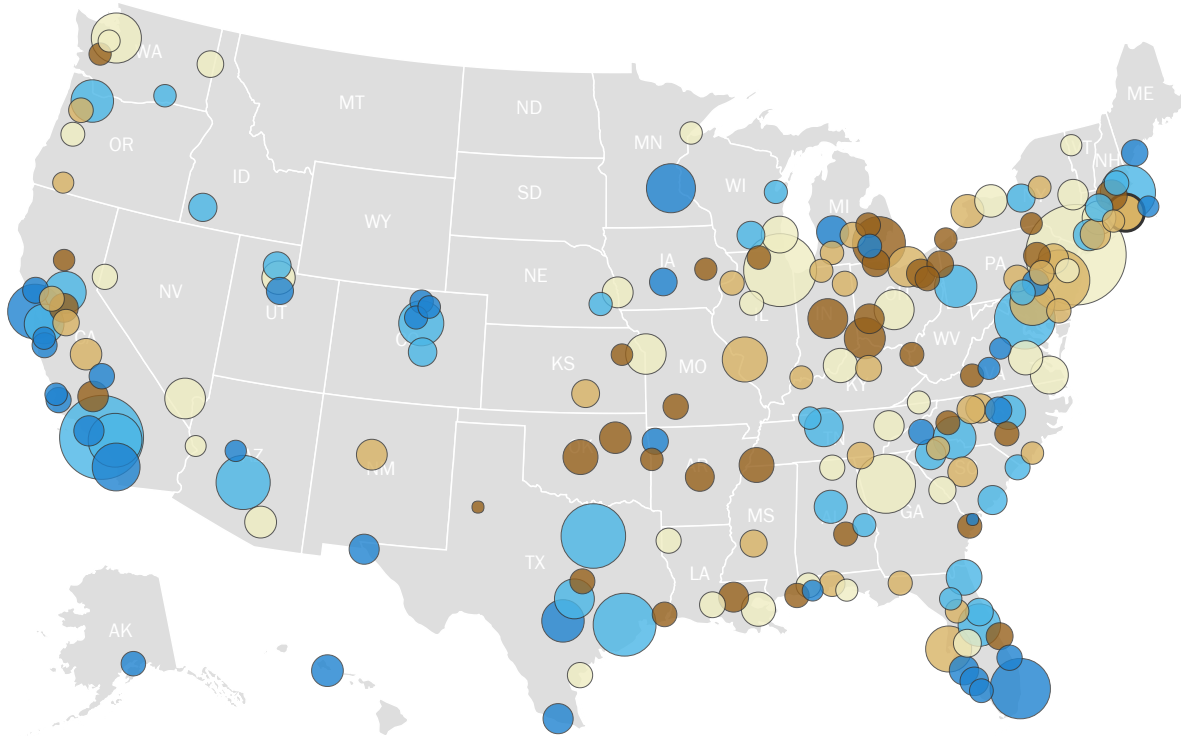
2016 City Well-Being Rankings

Hover over or tap circles, sized by population, to see detailed well-being
rankings, pinch or scroll to zoom.

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Highly ranked inland communities like Boulder, Colo. and El Paso, Texas had residents who
reported feeling a strong sense of purpose — often rooted in a shared culture and a feeling of
belonging. When people are invested in improving their community, they feel motivated to get
out of bed each day, says Healthways president Karissa Price. "It isn't just about physical health
or income — there is a larger need to feel connected," she says.

Highest Well-Being Communities

3. Santa Cruz–Watsonville, CA
4. Urban Honolulu, HI
5. Charlottesville, VA
6. North Port–Sarasota–Bradenton, FL
7. San Luis Obispo–Paso Robles, CA
8. Lynchburg, VA
9. Hilton Head Island–Bluffton–Beaufort, SC
10. Boulder, CO

Communities in the Southeastern U.S. and industrial Midwest were generally ranked lower in well-being, partly due to health problems including higher smoking and obesity rates.

Lowest Well-Being Communities

180. Montgomery, AL
181. Erie, PA
182. Beaumont–Port Arthur, TX
183. Chico, CA
184. Flint, MI
185. Canton–Massillon, OH
186. Topeka, KS
187. Huntington–Ashland, WV–KY–OH
188. Hickory–Lenoir–Morganton, NC
189. Fort Smith, AR–OK